

such that users can give a rating, such as 4 out of 5 stars, to indicate their preference toward or against an invention. An advantage to such a preference indicator or false currency system is that members of the public who decide not to invest real money (or are incapable of doing so) can nevertheless help to indicate public (and hence consumer) opinion about an invention. An investor may be more willing to invest \$10 or \$100 (or more) in an invention that has a very high star rating because she knows that many people approve of or like the invention. If stars act as currency, a user may click on Submit Star **50** to “spend” one of his stars on an invention, and the Number of Stars will reflect this submission.

**[0088]** The webpage may include a second information section **52** that may include other important information, such as regarding the price and selling information. For example, if shares of the invention are being sold in a Dutch auction, then the section **52** may include information on when the Auction Ends, the Number of Bids (or possibly the total number of shares currently bid for), the number of shares still needed to be bid on to ensure meeting the next threshold (not shown), the Current Clearing Price, etc. An investor may bid on one or more shares of the invention by clicking on Submit Bid **54**. Doing so will take him to another webpage (not shown) that allows him to enter a number of shares bid on, and a maximum bid price per share.

**[0089]** The webpage may include specific information about the invention, include first, second, and third (or more) pictures **56**, **58**, **60**, video **62**, abstract **64**, full description **66**, prior art or infringing uses **68**, and an inventor Q&A **70**. Of course, the webpage may include more or fewer than three pictures, and these pictures may include diagrams, photographs, drawings, figures, flowcharts, or any other visual depiction or description of the invention. The webpage may also include any other media that would be helpful in introducing and describing the invention. The video **62** may be a video of the inventor speaking about the invention, showing the working of a prototype, and so forth. The abstract **64** may be a brief description about the invention, while the full description **66** may be a fuller, more comprehensive, and in-depth written description. These descriptions may, at first, be produced by the inventor during the invention submission process. After a provisional patent application or prior art search request description are produced, these may be added to or may replace the inventor’s original descriptions. Each of the description boxes may include scroll bars to allow an investor to read the entire entry, and the webpage may itself include a scroll bar (not shown) if the information shown is too much to fit on the user’s computer monitor.

**[0090]** Prior Art or Infringing Uses **68** preferably contains information on inventions related to the described invention that have been sold, publicly used, published, or patented, and the date (if known) of such occurrences. Whether another invention is prior art, an infringing use, or neither depends on many factors, such as the other invention’s date of conception, reduction to practice, date of selling, public use, publication, or patent, as well as the described invention’s date of submission to the website, conception, reduction to practice, development stage of the invention, and so forth. The company could, of course, obtain a legal opinion regarding information and inventions cited in Prior Art or Infringing Uses **68**. However, in order to remain as hands-off as possible, the information may simply be published, allowing the public and free market to make the determination (with their investment money) as to whether a related invention is deal-breaking

prior art or a wallet-fattening potential infringer. Published in this section **68** may be the professional prior art search report, and/or information submitted by the users of the website. Users may have the option of submitting information about one or more related inventions or products by clicking on the Seen It? Submit **72** button, in which case they will have the chance to submit information (such as a patent or patent application number, magazine or newspaper article reference, etc.) on a related invention that may be relevant to the patentability of the described invention or relevant to its profitability after patenting.

**[0091]** The company may restrict who may submit information about related inventions (e.g., non-users, users, users who pay a fee, investors who deposit funds, or any combination of these entities), and/or may restrict the kinds of information that may be submitted. For example, there could be real problems with allowing any person to submit unsubstantiated claims regarding prior art. “I saw that thing at the Indiana State Fair back in 1947” is the sort of statement that, without further elaboration or evidence, is simply not valuable information, and could unfairly affect the value of shares of the invention. The company may require that users submit only specific kinds of easily verifiable information, such as patent or patent application numbers, magazine and newspaper article references, and so forth, so as to not unfairly prejudice the value of an invention. Of course, proponents of the free market might assert that information is valuable, no matter the quantity or source, and that investors will properly wade through the bad information and digest the good, in which case the company may allow more information to be submitted than that which is easily verifiable. Nevertheless, the company may provide on the website a template for submitting information regarding related inventions, which may or may not restrict the kind or quantity of information given. The company may provide checks-and-balances by allowing other users or the inventor to comment on information submitted in section **68**, and/or may allow users to request the company to remove particular kinds of information if they are clearly not informative or useful.

**[0092]** The Inventor Q&A **70** may allow users to ask questions to the inventor and let the inventor reply. The questions may be posted before being answered by the inventor, or only after the inventor has replied. Alternatively, the questions and corresponding answers may be kept confidential by means of private email, and/or the company may route messages to the inventor from users without giving any personal information about the inventor. The company may allow users to request the company to remove particular kinds of information if they are clearly not informative or useful. The webpage shown in FIG. **3** (and any other webpage of the present website) may include any of the links discussed with respect to the other drawings.

**[0093]** Referring now to FIG. **4**, a user may access her account by clicking a corresponding link on a different webpage, to reach My Account **76**, including information section **78** that includes the user’s username, name, address, phone number, email address, and other contact information, with an Update Information button **80** to allow the user to change any of this information. The webpage includes an account section **82** displaying the user’s Account Balance (in money) and Star Balance, as well as a section displaying “My Shares,” which includes a listing of all inventions that she owns shares in. For example, a first listing **84** includes an invention number, title, percent share owned by that user, total